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Spies in the Classroom

Thousands of students from Taiwan enroll in American colleges and universities each year—and often find that their government comes with them. Student-agents of Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang Party (KMT) haunt campuses all across the United States, taking names of suspected dissidents. The Libyans, Filipinos and South Koreans also spy on students here, but as Stanley Spector, a professor of Chinese studies at Washington University, says, "The Taiwanese seem to put the most money into it." The problem was spotlighted most dramatically last summer when Chen Wen-chen, a professor at Carnegie-Mellon University, went home to visit his parents and then was found dead on the campus of National Taiwan University. Although Chen's death was officially said to be an accident or suicide, many believe he was killed by the KMT because of alleged anti-government activities reported by spies in the United States.

According to Taiwan students here, as many as five branches of the KMT government (including the equivalents of the U.S. National Security Agency, FBI and Defense Department) gather intelligence in the United States. They are loosely organized through Taiwan's Coordination Council for North American Affairs. Students say the KMT often recruits its spies out of military academies. Most are bona fide students who moonlight as spies; a few are full-time agents posing as students. KMT officials in Taipei reportedly keep tabs on which U.S. schools need more informants and which students need to be watched. According to sources in the United States, some informants receive a monthly salary of \$600; others get \$50 or \$100 for each report they submit. In a sample report from Carnegie-Mellon, informants were asked to provide an "analysis of the situation between us and the enemies," as well as information regard-

ing various "enemies," with space allotted for five names.

When the KMT gets a negative report about a student, it usually issues a warning. Further transgressions can prompt a visit by security police to the student's family; ultimately, "dissidents" may have their passports revoked and be imprisoned. Rita Yeh, a former University of Minnesota student, was sentenced to a fourteen-year prison term in January 1981, in part because she attended Chinese movies in the United States.

Stranger: Because no one is certain who the spies are, meeting a colleague is a strain for Taiwanese students. At Yale University, where there are reported to be at least three spies among the 45 Taiwanese, students are careful about what they say in front of each other. Last fall one Taiwanese student at an Ivy League school transferred to another college for a semester, and soon received a visit from a countryman he had never met. During the visit, he discovered the names of reputed spies in the stranger's notebook. When the student returned to his old campus this spring, he saw the stranger there, too. Students say there are also more subtle ways of identifying probable spies. Anyone who can afford frequent trips home, or who returns during key political holidays in October, is suspect.

Taiwan Government officials in the United States deny that any spying goes on. According to Congressional sources, however, the U.S. Justice Department and the FBI acknowledged the problem during House Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee hearings last year on Chen's death. The House passed legislation, softened in conference with the Senate, that would have banned arms sales to countries that have spies on American campuses. Meanwhile, the U.S. Government and the universities are inadvertently subsidizing informers: some students get grants from both, along with their spy allowance from Taiwan.

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